

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 PM-03 DODE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 L-01 IO-06 /048 W
-----115175 170648Z /20
R 161751Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0270
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL BELIZE

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 2861

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, BH, GT
SUBJ: PRESIDENT-ELECT LUCAS WILL BE TOUGHER ON BELIZE

1. BELIZE WAS ONE OF THE SUBJECTS ADDRESSED BY GENERAL ROMEO LUCAS DURING HIS MAY 12 CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR AND POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF. (SEPTTEL DEALS WITH OTHER ASPECTS.)

2. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S INQUIRY REGARDING FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS OF THE INCOMING GOVERNMENT, BELIZE AMONG THEM, LUCAS BEGAN BY SAING THAT THE CONSTITUTION REQUIRED THE ARMY TO DEFEND GUATEMALA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. THUS, IF INDEPENDENCE WERE GRANTED WITHOUT GUATEMALAN CONSENT, THE ARMY WOULD HAVE TO MOVE. OTHERWISE THE GUATEMALAN PEOPLE WOULD ASK WHY HAVE AN ARMY. WHILE HE WAS NOT OPPOSED TO A COMPROMISE SOLUTION BASED ON TERRITORIAL TRANSACTION, THE MOHO LINE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION. IT WOULD REPRESENT A TRANSFER OF NOTHING BUT SWAMPLAND IN HIS VIEW. BETRAYING A CERTAIN UNFAMILIARITY WITH BELIZEAN HYDROGRAPHY, LUCAS NOTED THAT AT FLOOD STAGE THE SARSTOON AND MOHO ROVERS ARE ONE.

3. GENERAL LUCAS SAID GUATEMALA DID NOT ASPIRE TO ALL OF
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BELIZE, "ONLY TOLEDO DISTRICT." GUATEMALA HAD ETHNIC AFFINITIES WITH THE LATTER AND NEEDED IT TO PROVIDE OCEAN ACCESS FOR PETEN PRODUCTION VIA POPTUN. ASKED WHETHER HE REALLY MEANT ALL OF TOLEDO DISTRICT, LUCAS RETREATED SOMEWHAT AND SAID PERHAPS NOT EVEN EVERYTHING SOUTH OF THE MONKEY RIVER WOULD BE NECESSARY, CONCEDING AT ONE POINT THAT THE GOG HAD NO PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE (MAYA) MOUNTAINS.

4. LUCAS MAINTAINED THAT THE CUBANS WERE TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION, AND ALLUDED TO CONTACTS BETWEEN THEM AND BELIZEAN ATTORNEY GENERAL ASSAD SHOMAN. HE DESCRIBED THE DISPUTE AS A "RUNNING SORE," AND EXPRESSED THE FERVENT HOPE THAT IT WOULD BE SETTLED SOON SO THAT THE TWO PEOPLES COULD LIVE IN PEACE.

5. COMMENT: THESE COMMENTS SUPPORT EXPECTATIONS THAT THE LUCAS GOVERNMENT WILL PROVE CONSIDERABLY LESS FLEXIBLE THAN THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION ABOUT WHAT MIGHT CONSTITUTE A SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT. THEY ALSO SUGGEST AGAIN THAT HE AND VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT VILLAGRAN KRAMER (SEE GUATEMALA 2248) DO NOT SEE EYE TO EYE ON THIS ISSUE.
BOSTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT ELECT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 may 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GUATEM02861
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780207-0523
Format: TEL
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780555/aaaabupt.tel
Line Count: 77
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9252c19c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2681346
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT-ELECT LUCAS WILL BE TOUGHER ON BELIZE
TAGS: PBOR, PDIP, BH, GT, (LUCAS, ROMEO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9252c19c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014